

Title: Interview with Troy 'Bo' Ward

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Interviewer(s): Christian Ottey and Carolyn Kio

Interviewee: Troy 'Bo' Ward

Introduction: Troy 'Bo' Ward talks about what it was like to grow up in Crisfield, and how things have changed in the raising of kids in comparison to his time. He also talks about his experiences with flooding, how he helps his neighbors, sister, and his time in church.

[Transcription begins]

Christian Ottey (Ottey): Alrighty, this one's good.

Carolyn Kio (Kio): Well, so today is, what's the date?

Ottey: April 14th.

Kio: April 14th.

Ottey: 2025. And my name is Christian Ottey.

Kio: And I am Carolyn Kio, and we are here with...

Troy 'Bo' Ward (Ward): Troy Ward.

Kio: All right. Would you like to start?

Ottey: Yeah, so first question on our list here, and we might just go off of what you say for questions and we might just state the list. It all depends on the kind of answers you give us. So first question here is, how long have you lived in the Crisfield area? And if you were born here, what was that like? If you've retired here, why did you retire in Crisfield? And how has it changed since? What kind of keeps you in Crisfield?

Ward: I was born here in Crisfield, and- and well, actually, I was born and raised in Crisfield, but when I got of, was about 16, I worked in Washington, D.C. And the way that worked was I would go to D.C. for a whole week and work and then come home for a week. So it was like a- a week on and a week off. And I did that for 10, 10 or so years. Then I actually, after I left the

working in Washington, I came back home because after I got married, it was like, you're home with your wife and your family, and I got tired of doing that, you know. Our marriage was getting kind of hectic. So I decided to quit and I got another job as soon as I got out from- got- when I left Washington. And I started working for a moving company, going back and forth, taking trips everywhere to just moving people. It was like Barry Van Lines Moving Company. I only did it for like a year and a half. I was like the supervisor as far as loading the trucks and I left that. And I got a job working for a pharmaceutical plant in Salisbury. And I worked there for a year and a half, almost two years, which I became assistant supervisor there, and that's like a pharmaceutical. They would making a pharmaceutical thing for like- like the rubbers that they put inside of medicine bottles and stuff, syringe bottles. It weren't for me so I left there and I went to, well actually, the same day I left there I got a job from Pepsi Cola and I've been working with Pepsi Cola now for 26 years, so that's where I'm at right now and life's good with Pepsi. I got a 401 and saved some money and so that was a good, just, well, I want to retire there so I might do another year and I'd be done. So that's where I'm at right now with that.

Kio: Yeah, and what kind of like keeps you in this area? Do you think you're gonna?

Ward: Let me tell you something about this area, I, you know, I've been to cities, but it's nothing like home and I was born and raised here. Actually, I'm a farmer, farm- farm boy. Started out in Marion when I was a kid. And from what I can remember, we only moved probably, I think, five or six times. And it from Marion, it just kept getting closer and closer to Crisfield. Stopped in Hopewell. We lived there for a few years. Don't tell, I can't tell you how many years, cause I was just a kid and then we came down farther, we ended up going all the way downtown with some houses there. They're not there anymore. It's down by the- what's in there now, some restaurants and there's a bank down in that area. But there used to be houses there. We stayed there. Then there used be some juke joints up the road a little ways. We stayed behind the juke joint. I do remember that. It was the juke joint where they used to drink and all that, and we stayed in the back. We stayed here for a long time, about a year or so. And they may end up moving across on the west side back on, near, Cove Street. That's where we moved to. There used to be houses lined up there. We stayed there. And after we left there, we went to Pine Street, which is right over here behind the Dollar General Store, 322 Pine Street. That's where we lived when it was kid and I. And at that time, I turned, I was 15. I quit school. I quit school, I had, my childhood life was, we had a piece of father, well, stepfather and, I just couldn't stay there no more. I- I left home at 15 and I went to Washington and then I- that's where I started working decent. I was making money, I came home, and I rented a- a house. Well, it wasn't a house, it was a boarding house. You run a room and I stayed there for about three or four years. And then, I, you know, when you're young, I was drinking and doing all this and that because I figured I'm grown, you know, I had to, I'm living on my own now. And, finally I met this girl and she's nine years older than me. But we was dating and ended up falling in love with her, got married. We still together at 30, 33 years.

Kio: I bet she keeps you in line.

Ward: She kept me in line, so yeah. But Crisfield, to get back to Crisfield, it's like home, you know? I know everybody here, and everybody knows me. I went to school with a lot of them, and I just love it here. Yeah, I just loved it here, the only bad thing about it is, like they say, the floods. The floods are, well, I can tell you the story about the last two floods that I remember. The last one that we had, we just had not too long ago. It was really bad. It was bad, bad, it was bad- bad, cause I was out in it. My sister had called me, and I won't forget it. It was blowing, I mean, it was blowing windy. And the tide had come up, it had come all the way across. This was covered with water, all of this, all the way up to the main road, all the way across. And my sister had called and said that they were stuck down in Lawsonia. That's down in the wooded area. I said, "How'd you get down there?" She went with her friend to Walmart to get groceries. And she had all these groceries. And the car had broke down over here, stopped right in the flood. And the- the big truck came and picked them up, city truck. Picked them all up and carried her down to the girl's house where she stayed, the one she was shopping with. And that was kind of bad. I was like, "Why didn't you tell them to take you over to the project where you live?" "That's what it took me!" and she said, I said, "Okay. All right, I'll try to get down there." I had this real, real big truck, big tires, I mean, four-wheel drive. And I said, "Well I'll be down there." It was old though, old truck, and I could not run through water and everything with her. So, I'll go down there. I go down by the Woodson School and I go- go down to the left. And, it was bad. The water got so deep, it was up to my headlights. I was looking over, the water was over top of cars. And when you go down this that way, there's the ocean's right there. And I got so scared, I had to stop because I didn't know where the road and the ditch, it all looked the same. Until I kept going slow and slow, trying to stay in the middle. Then I saw this place that I knew was a driveway with a marker. And I went in there and I turn around. And I came back out and there was an electric truck down- down the road I was going to go down the way. And I said, "Well, that's the only way I can go." Then I looked and I said, "Nah I ain't going to do it." I went down a half way and over the field, man, it- it was weird. This place, this house had a- a big pen that was fenced in and it had turkey, it had a turkey in it. A big old turkey and a pig. And water was like, there was like this, I was like, and they had this, the turkey had got up on top of this, like a- I guess it was a chicken house. They had chickens all around, he was on top of that, and it- it just blew my mind. And it had turkey buckets all around it. So I backed up, went the other way. It was only one way I could go last. And I went down this other road and came through the back way. And it was, roads were bad there too, but God had, it felt like I could see the yellow strip and the road through the water and I stayed on that and I got to the house and when I got to the house, she came to the door and she had all these groceries and I had my boots on, mind you, I jump out the truck. And it goes over my boots. I'm mad now, so- so I go get her and I get all the bags. I take my sister out, she walking with her pants legs up in the water, she gets in the truck and we go back to our house, we get to the projects. We go to the door, I take the only bag, I said, "Open the door!" She said, "I lost my keys!" couldn't find the keys, left the keys because when she got in the truck, she must have dropped them in the water. So I'm mad now. I mean,

the wind is blowing, it's cold and my feet are about to freeze. She said, "Well, you can go through the window." So she left through the windows. I said, "Why do I got to go through window?" you know? So I go through a window, I look it up, and I go back home and tell my wife what happened. She said because people, all people call me all day. They go down to the Food Lion to pick them up, bring them back to the projects. And I was doing that. And my wife said, "You're not going out for nobody else, this is it." So I do a lot of good deeds for Crisfield, but that was one of the worst ones that I've been through. And the other one was like, that was Sandy. Sandy was really bad, but I never left the house on Sandy. It was so bad, they were they was calling for a second wave coming through and they had the National Guards in Crisfield was coming up the road. It was taking everybody out of the houses. I mean, kids, dogs. And we were the last house, because I live on a dead-end road. And they came to knocking on our door. Boom, boom, boom. "Are you all going?" and my wife said, "No, we're not going," because my wife, she's a praying woman. She said, "We gonna stay here," so we stayed and, but we never slept. We stayed up all night long and I was watching my truck tire to see, you know, where your high creasing was coming up. They got by that close from coming in the house. And we looked out there again and it was going down, it went down. It was good. That was- that was the worst, that was the bad one, because we watched the trees, these two great big trees across the street from us just fall right over. They were the worst two storms I've ever known since I've been living here. They said there was one back in the day, Hazel, but I don't remember that one. So.

Ottey: Okay. So what do you kind of just do around Crisfield for recreation or maybe just how do you entertain yourself?

Ward: How do I entertain myself in Crisfield? You know, to tell you what, tell you the truth, I'm a workaholic. I, when I get off of work, I do odds and ends jobs for people. I cut a few, well, one time I had like 20-something yards of grass I used to cut. But I couldn't really do that and work at Pepsi. You got, you know, you gotta have good help, but I didn't have good help. I ended up giving all the yards away. But- but I didn't charge that like. These are like church people that I live with. I mean, what church we have and I would go around and cut the grass, just a little nothing. Sometimes I wouldn't even charge them, but they would give me something, because they felt like, you know. But, yeah. And, you know, as I got older, I used to play basketball down to basketball courts. That's when I was, I didn't even play that much. I did a lot of work, I always worked. And me and my wife would go out and eat, go to Salisbury. Not right, Riverside. The biggest thing round here is Crab Derby. That's only once a year. They have a little odds and end things. But I'm content being at home, to tell you the truth.

Ottey: So you've never really like gone to a lot of Crisfield community events?

Ward: I'll go to them, well, when, see, it's two different sides. When I was younger and when I drank, I'd go out and party all the time, but as I got older, I don't do that anymore. I'm more into the church. And now I go to a- like I go to a lot of different churches. I sing on three choirs. And

churches call our choir to sing, like Lent Season. We sing at Emanuel, it's a church down the street here, and Church of God, the one up on the high, will be singing there this year. And then we travel a lot. My choir's traveled a lot singing, and I have more fun doing that than anything, you know, because I'm doing something for God, you know, but like I said, we all got to pass, we're back in the day. Hey, I'd shake it with them.

Kio: And what role does like the waterfront or the Chesapeake Bay in general play in like recreation and social life for this community?

Ward: Well, this community, we got a lot of people that likes to crab, fish, see I don't like that. I don't like fishing. I've been on boats going out, just not my thing. I worked in D.C. for there was many years on a boat selling seafood, I just, I figured, I can just buy it and then go out there and sit in a boat. Some people think it's relaxing and but it's not me, you know, that's- that's what they do around here, like they people come down here, my brother, I gotta- my brother, he goes out and he gets oysters. I don't know where he gets them from, but he'd come back with oysters. I mean, I'll eat it, but the pleasure of going out doing it, no now, that ain't me. [pauses]

Ottey: So, I know- I know we've discussed some of the past flooding events in Crisfield from anew, in the past have lived here. What kind of things do you do to prepare for flooding events?

Ward: To prepare for it?

Ottey: Yeah.

Ward: Well, nothing. You can really never prepare for it. I mean you can, okay, I'll tell you what I usually do. If I know it's gonna be a storm coming down, I usually go out to my sheds, cause I got two sheds. And I try to elevate everything up high. Cause my shed, none of my stuff is, it's really bad over where I live at, because I have a ditch, and they haven't did anything about digging it out so the water will stay, water is there right now, just stays there until it gets real hot, then we don't get no rain. But it'll stay there and then it's not good because, you know, all it does is call mosquitoes and- and you hear frogs all night long, but they needed dig that out. But preparing, yeah, if I know a storm is coming, I'll move the vehicles and most of the time what I have to do I have to take them up to Food Lion parking lot, park my vehicles up there, and I will have to bring my truck home because then I would have to drive, because I go to work at two o'clock in the morning. I get up at one, I go work at two in the morning. I'm a salesman and my store is in Berlin, Maryland, and I'm salesman, so I go there and do my orders in the morning, and then work the truck, and the trucks to check for. So, I'd take my cars and vehicles up there, and I'd my home truck and go up, because if you're back, well, they just took our vehicle, I just have a Pepsi vehicle, and I would drive up there. Get in the Pepsi vehicle, then drive to work. And when I came home, I had to swap, come back home. Swap, get all my vehicles back home from the floods. So that's the way they use the works. That's how I prepare. But, you know, when you get a flood, man, it's like, you don't know. It didn't tell you it's gonna be a flood. You don't

how high it's going to be. At the same time, I wake up, boom, the flood's there. And you didn't know nothing about it.

Kio: Have you seen any of your neighbors or other community members or even like the city try to prepare for these flooding events?

Ward: Yeah, the city will, if they know it's gonna be a flood, most times what they would do, they'll have like a- a sandbags in a certain area, right up on by the city hall where they have bags at or you can, well, not even bags. They'd put a big pile of dirt, you'd shoving your own dirt, your own sand in your bags and take it to your work or home, try to block off. And my neighbors, all my neighbors are old people, so I just has- I just check on them, see what I can do for them, you know, and sometimes their kids will come around, but most of my neighbors, I take care of all my neighbors. But the one in back of me, he died, him and his wife. They had a high house, and he was like, he always called me son, he would, he'd always say, "If it gets too bad, we'll just come over to the house." I said, "How am I gonna get to your house?" His house is in the back of my house, at the water's. I've got to get a boat and get to his house. So, yeah.

Ottey: What kind of things have you done for your neighbors to help out during- during floods?

Ward: Oh, I'd go to the store if they needed something, I would do just about anything. If something goes wrong in the house, electric goes out or something that they need some lights, I can take over the flashlights. I'm always prepared for that kind of stuff. I have all that kind stuff to go help my neighbors. If they call, then again, you know, I put my boots on and I'll walk the neighborhood around my area to look at the roads and see what's floating out in the roads- in the roads. Sometimes you see stuff that's out and you gotta get out of the road, and I'll do all that. And I have a neighbor down there. They got what see one of my neighbors he's got a high, two of them, the one in back, I mean, and the one up front. He's gonna, they got high houses, but the one, the other ones had flooded out before and they have- they haven't ride risen them up, me raised them up, but they had to tear the floors all out and redo them, those houses. And the one, out across the street, they had to actually tear it out and down and put a new one, but it didn't raise it. And they all went gone, far, so that's gone. There's one, two, three, four houses where I'm at, I'm a dead road, dead-end road. But yeah, I- I- I look out for my neighbors, best I can, you know.

Ottey: So has there been anything, so you haven't like done any like preparation as far as your house goes, making any renovations to it, to better prepare it from flooding or?

Ward: You mean raise it?

Ottey: Yeah.

Ward: Well, you know what, it's good, I'm glad you asked that question, because when the people was down here raising the houses, I asked about that, you know, because, could I get my house raised? And, she said they said something about, I knew it was back then they said something that you could pay so much amount of money and they would do it for, you know, they would put the rest to it but that- that I don't think they're around anymore, the girl that does that. She may be back or not. But, you know, I got to the point because I had the- the house mover, what's his name, I had him to come and look at it and he said it would cost \$20,000. And I said, "Well, I have to get back with you because I want to see if I can get some help to get it done," you know, but I don't think that thing is still working right now, but they had the help. But I- I- I really want to get a raised. But, here's the thing, I'm gonna tell you the thing. My house, it's been remodeled and everything and, you know, when you raise a house, it tears the walls and all up anyway. And I got so frustrated with my living back there, when the water's- water's actually on the main road coming in too, just on the rain. Because where they got the land, just one land, they got it so that the properties drains, drains towards the road instead of letting it drain back in the ditch. And I got a little frustrated. I told my wife, "We got it to move." She don't want it to go, she likes it back there. Cause she got a nice deck and she loves flowers and all that. But I ended up buying another house on Main Street. I wasn't looking to buy it; it was one of my customers that I used to work for. Well, the man died, then she died. So, but hers- her stepson doesn't live here and I asked him, I said, "What are you going to do with the house?" He said, "Why you want to buy it?" I said, "It's a pricey right?" so he tells me, he says, "Well make me an offer." I said, "Make you an offer?" so I made an offer. He said, "Well the house is yours," so I go to my 401 and I get the money out paying cash. So, I got another house on Main Street, beautiful house. Need some work, it's not the way I want it, but it needs some work because you know, elderly people are living in it and it's got a garage. It's got the garage; I can pull my car. But it's still low. So I'm in a- I'm- I'm in- I'm in a hard spot right now because I don't want to put a lot of money in this house. And this flood comes and messes me up. I'd rather- I'm still seeking to try to find a way to get these houses raised. The worst-case scenario, I really don't want to sell this one. You know what I'm saying? Because this is one, we got married and this is the house. But I'll go for this house if I can get it up. But I- I don't know what to do yet. So right now, I'm in a hard spot. I'm trying to work with mayor through that, see what I can do. If they help me out a little bit, fine. I just don't know. I'm at a hard spot right now. I'm trying to figure it out.

Kio: Yeah, that seems like it'd be a very difficult decision.

Ward: Yeah, it's very, yeah, yeah, I think about it all the time. I said, "What am I going to do?" I go to this house every day, this new house. I go there every day because I got all, I got a lot of stuff over there already. The garage is like full. Let me let you know, I do crazy stuff like junk. I do work, all ground and tin- tin metal, like an old refrigerator and stuff. And I take it up and get money for it. This is what my side job is, break down air conditioning and stuff. I like doing it, I love doing it, to tell you the truth. And this is my downtime doing that. I take it over there and tinker with it, throw- throw a piece of copper over here, piece of aluminum over here, some steel

back here. Let's see what I'm doing with this house. The people, the neighbors are like, what is this guy doing? Keep bringing all this stuff over here and then next thing you know I got a whole load of it going out. So it's something my- my wife, she likes when we do that too, cause she gives me something to do. And eventually the property over there just goes way back. It's got a lot of wooded area. I want to clear all that out. Maybe I might do a little something back in that area because it- it's secluded. Yeah.

Kio: That's nice. Have you noticed any changes in the land, weather, water, or flooding in Crisfield over time since you've been here like your whole life?

Ward: Yeah, right. It's getting higher and higher each time. It's getting higher and highest. It seems like it's everything is sinking. I even sit on my deck. My deck is getting like I look at it and I was like, "Is this thing sinking or what?" It's like it is getting lower and or tilting a little bit. My house is like that too, cause the ground is sinking, I noticed that. It bothers me sometimes when I sit back and watch these things. And then, you know, when it gets really, really hot and no water, you know, and it don't rain for a while. It's like, its, you get a peaceful come over, you know, it's nice and hot and you don't see the water. Then you get out, October comes, storms coming in again, you get a little worried again. But we pray and God is took care of us so.
[pauses]

Ottey: So, for the issue of flooding, have there been like any community events that you've participated in, maybe with the church, and I know there's a like a Crisfield Resilience Academy that they do here to discuss the topic of flooding and to try and figure out what plans they can implement.

Ward: Now they've had a couple of those here. They've had some flooding meetings. I've never attended any one of those, to tell you the truth, but I've heard about them. The mayor leads it. They talk about putting up this barrier around. Supposed to put a barrier around Crisfield down towards the Lawsonia area and put new floodgates in [inaudible] because they've done something though, because my church is right over here and that street stays flooded. And I told them one time, cause when I go to work at two o'clock in the morning, the water used to be in the median strip. I would go to the work, work, and I would look in the median strip, and there wouldn't be a narrow drop of water in the median strip, but there would be flooded. It was like that for a long time. When we go to church, we had to be careful. Sometimes if we had church and the tide come up, we had stop to service because we know how high we get. I'm gonna tell you how bad it got one time. Got flooded over there, and with a funeral, and the funeral, I never would've forget it, and but the tide had came up, but you know, at a funeral nobody's going nowhere, they stayed in the church, and I told them "The tides up." And people were still coming. It wasn't high, but it was steady coming, and you couldn't get to cross the road and get to it. So, I went home, got my boots, put my boots on, and I was carrying the women inside, walking through the water, taking them in the church. And when it came out, the tide was down

when the funeral was over. But I remember that, I took about six or seven women in the church. But yeah, they had the- they had meetings about this flood and they're trying to because they got a couple of grants, 30-something million, \$36 million, first phase. But we'll see. And I always said to myself, I don't see how it's going to do anything. When water comes like that, I don't see it, you can, maybe relieve it a little bit, but I don't see. Me, myself, I mean, I don't see how it's going to help. But they say it will, so.

Kio: Is there anyone that you know that has had to like move away from Crisfield due to the flooding or like any stories around like major repairs to homes or anything really like that revolving around damages from the flood?

Ward: Yeah, I know a lot of them that damage like y'all say my neighbors all had to get their floors redone. Actually, there's a couple of being done right now there's over on Cove Street. It's a lady. She just got- they got her up in the air, she's- it's a big house, they got up in the air, but they can't- they go put a foundation in yet because we- the last two or three weeks been raining and they can't put the foundation in so they gotta wait till it dries out before they can put the foundations. So she's staying actually right across here, this house, big house here, and this house here. It just got elevated that was her- her son's mother stayed there. She died, but that house was raised cause it was low. That's the only one- only one that got raised on this road here though. The one next door is not even raised, the next two. But that one got raised. I don't know if they based it on income to get it raised. I don't know. That could be a reason, you know. They could base it on the income. But I know a lot of people that's got him raised, especially down on Chesapeake Rochester, there's one two, three, four, at least four on my street just got them raised. But move away, I don't know anyone that's moved away that I knew of. Most people that I know that moved away from here was one that left high school and just said, "Choo!" and they were like, "I'm out!" but not because of the flood. And maybe, I mean, they could have. I mean I, you know, but I don't, I don't talk to them as they ever said that was cause of the flood. Most of them moved away from here because there's nothing to here as far as doing anything. I mean, you got very few things to do here and, you know, back in the day, this place used to be banging because they had four, five bars and stuff, you know, people drank. They don't have that here now. You don't see any- many bars. This place, Hillsborough, the only place that had a big crowd there in the summertime. Just, I forgot the name of the place, crab place, and they have busses come down and go there to eat and then they go out on a boat for a cruise, but that's one of the biggest things people come here for at that and Crab Derby. But Crab Derby is not like it used to be down here. Maybe it's because I got older too. When you're younger, things seems bigger, you know? So.

Ottey: So how do you think the- the like restaurant industries or maybe the fishing and crabbing industries have kind of like changed? You mentioned they used to be booming back in the day.

Ward: All down. Oh no, not doing what it used to do. Restaurant's down here. Terrible. This just it's terrible. I mean, we got one, two, three, four, five restaurants, six, maybe six. But they're not- they're not top-notch restaurants. I mean, I eat, you know, I eat something every now and then. I can cook just as good at home. In that top notch. I mean, because you don't see, no, nothing. Business, the only thing we got here is a McDonald's. As far as name brand, everything else is home, home restaurants. But they're in the seafood business. Oyster houses, crab houses, used to be packed, people picking crabs and shucking oysters. This young generation don't do that, this new generation now, they ain't gonna do that. Most of the people that work down in there are migrants, like Spanish or something like that, you know, doesn't. For a few, you got one to two blacks down there that still do it, and they're older, they're not young, you know, but when they die out, this young generation, they ain't doing that. It's a new world now, you know, with all the new technologies they want. They ain't gonna try to do no hard work. If they ain't never done it, they ain't gonna do it, trust me. Yeah. Crisfield is, this town is good for, if you're going to retire and don't want to do nothing, this is the place to be. But if you want to have some fun, for a young person, I don't think this is a place you want to be because they don't have any amusement parks or nothing like that. They mean you got a park, but you don't have no water stuff like Ocean City or Atlantic City. You don't have none of that down here, they get something like that to draw people here. Because, you, cause this is like a dead end, boom, you run into the water. But, you know, when they say water, it's supposed to be like, "Hey, let's go down there. This is where the water is at." I mean, you got a beautiful scene, but there's nothing here. You know what I'm saying?

Kio: And how are businesses overall doing in Crisfield? How does like the future of local business look do you think?

Ward: They trying to build, they try build put new businesses in. I've seen a couple of them come in, but they don't last. They don't last. Especially the restaurant. Come here and talk about putting a restaurant in. This guy downtown is telling me he's going to do a restaurant, a seafood restaurant. I said, "I'll tell you, Eric, it won't work. I mean, not unless you're going to something like online, like the rest of them are, the ones that's making it are online." Doing things like, like I said, "Crab Place or Linton's," saying this place is only so big, I mean, as far as the town itself, I wouldn't do it. I would open up, I'm not- not out here, no.

Kio: And you think that limiting factor is like the size of Crisfield?

Ward: Now, it's just that. To- to- to go to these kind of places and eat really, it costs money. Both people, there's no jobs here, there are no jobs in Crisfield, there are no factories or nothing, you gotta go to Salisbury, you're gonna go to work in Salisbury, you just wouldn't move to Salisbury, you see what I'm saying? There's nothing here, I mean, these little penhand jobs going on in these little restaurants, that ain't nothing. What else they got here? Firemen, police department, Family Dollar store, grocery store. And it's probably hard to get them new jobs

because basically that looked pretty full to me. So you see what I do, I work, I want to move to Berlin. I read about my wife, "Naw, I don't want to go to Berlin." I- I- I like Berlin, it's nice. Nice, I mean, close to Ocean City, got all you want right down there. Here, I'm driving near an hour a day, so there's two hours, up and back. And I was talking to my wife. One day we might have to move Berlin. Just said, nah, we're getting over now, we'll be all right. We'll see, we'll see.

Ottey: So we talked about some of the food industry and like some of the restaurants. What about some of the like the stores around Crisfield, like some gift shops or anything? Do you see the same kind of trend happening to them where people just don't really?

Ward: Stores? You mean the food stores?

Ottey: Um.

Ward: We got both of the foods, we ain't have no clothing store and nothing else.

Ottey: Yeah, I've seen a couple of gift shops downtown but you know.

Ward: Gift shops, yeah, they don't do nothing. They might do something when you get a few. Like I say, a big day, Labor Day or something like it. When they a- sometimes they have a little, we have like a- what do they call that? Soft Shell Festival downtown and they have something else down there once a year. Used to do something every other month, used to do something down there, but I was there, I'd go down there. Nothing to have a car show, but there's nothing big. I mean, I don't see that where it's doing. Nah, just give them something to do. It's not nothing great, and then sometimes they'll have like a music thang. I remember one time they had a jazz thing downtown. They did pretty good. Then they had these, what do you call these, country things they have out in the field. They- they call it something. Bluegrass. They'd done that a couple times. That brought some people in. That was way over the other side of town. I mean, when you have these things, it's not consistent. You know what I'm saying? So, people are coming in and town is dead again, like now, town's dead now.

Ottey: So, you think there needs to be more stuff like that? Does that kind of stuff appeal to the youth? Those music festivals that they have?

Ward: Oh yeah, I'm going to all, you know, I'm a music man, I just told you, church, I like to sing. I like listening to music, all kinds of music, yeah, this is what I like. I like seeing them playing guitars and that's good man, and I like that.

Ottey: You just want more of it.

Ward: Hell out of that, that would be, this would be nice.

Ottey: And do you think that's something that would appeal to the youth as well?

Ward: Oh yeah, oh yeah! They got some big fields right there can put some stuff out their man and have some good times, man. You know, they have these little meetings asking what we could do for what- what- what? What has your questions like? They tell you come to these meetings and give some input on what you think we need this time; I've never been to one yet. Maybe I should go to one. You know, I got some good ideas too, my wife tells me all the time, "I want you to go because you got some good ideas." I say, "I don't." But I get frustrated sometimes, some people say, no, it ain't right, I'm like forget it. I was like, yeah, I don't want to do all the work. So that's where I am. I even do it in church board meetings sometimes. I try to tell them. So I said, okay, I ain't saying no more.

Kio: Do you have any opinions on how this city, county, or state is handling flooding or like these generalized issues we've been talking about in Crisfield?

Ward: No, well, actually, I'm hoping that they're on it. I mean, we got a mayor that's, she's really good. Darlene is really good, and she- she's doing it. Hey, I think she's done more since any mayor we've had in this town. She is trying to help people that- that's in poverty. Cause you know, one time they was talking about trying to get rid of some of these projects over here, but she's fought, she's fighting for them. She fights for the people, that's what I like about her. For all people, that's what I like about her, she's for all people. But she's, I let her out of that. She calls me sometimes and wants me to get on some board. I did get on one board though. I got on the- I'm on the Planning and Zoning Board. I did get on that and we do- I do pretty good with them on that. But she wants me run for mayor too. I have a lot to ask me to run for mayor. I said, "No, no, that's not for me," and in the meantime, I don't do it because people will criticize me about some things I've did, like not graduating. I didn't graduate from high school. And that's kind of funny because... do I tell her? I will tell you this much though, I went to get my GED. Actually, I was right here in this room taking courses.

Kio: Oh yeah.

Ward: For my GED. I passed everything. Every course except for math. I didn't pass math. And the lady that was teaching me, my teacher, they took her out, moved her. And she was really good because she was right beside me. I mean right beside me teaching me this. And I learned it. And when they took her, they gave me this other lady, and all she wanted to talk was talking about herself, her husband and all that. She wasn't teaching me nothing. I got frustrated and I quit. Just didn't go. I didn't do it. But I did take the test when Sharon was here. She said, "Take the tests anyway." I took it. Guess what I got? A 48. You know what you need? A 49.

Kio: Oh, man.

Ward: I got so, and I just quit, said alright. Cause I said to myself, "Why do I need to take, why I need a GED for? I'm old. I got a, I mean, I got a job. I'm doing fine." I said, "I don't need it." So that was like three or four year ago. So, they called me back again, sending me this letter. "Troy,

you need to get this GED. All you got to do is pass the math and you." So I said, "Okay." Yeah, three or four years, I forgot a lot again. You know, I'm getting older. So, get in there and they give me the teacher. And they like the teacher, don't teach, you know. What made me so mad with it was like, the teacher that I had, I was doing a formula and she was said, she was doing it and she said, "What'd you get?" She said, "I got this." She said let's see what the thing says. I had the right answer. She had the wrong answer. I said, "Wait a bit now. She don't know what she's doing." So I just stopped going. I just stopped going. That was one of the things. Yeah. And to think about it, my real father- my real father was an educator, but I wasn't raised by him. I was just a black sheep with my family. He announced me, like from here with you, but in the streets, wouldn't do it, would not do it. That bothered me all my life, all my life, still is. He's dead now, but that's not the story.

Kio: That's really tough.

Ward: But people say, "You're doing all right, but don't worry about it." Mom tells me, you know, when your mother tells you that, and the thing about it, he was in the same church we go to, and she said, "He's your father." So, I asked him, I said, "Mom said you was my father." He said, "She never told me." Right then and there I knew he was lying. My mom. Okay, I'm gonna cross that one.

Kio: Sure thing, sure thing. Do you think younger generations are less likely to stay in Crisfield than they were in the past?

Ward: Young generations? It depends. Because it depends if, I'll put it this way, I'll tell you what I've seen. With people. Church people. Sometimes it irritates me in church when they do this. The kid will be going to school, graduate, and parents will be so proud of him, you know, and I'm sitting there and I'm saying to myself, well, you know, "I guess I should have graduated" and, you know, my mom and all of them would be proud and doing the same thing they do for these people. 80% of them kids that did that in this church, what do you think they at? They ain't in here, they not in church. You know where they at? In jail! In jail! When you graduate from school, you're supposed to get your life ready to go somewhere, to do something. They're in jail! A lot of them in the church, I'm like, they were all about talking about their child, how their child was going to be so great. And they're in jail. I could not name them just like that. I said, "What's the use? Going to school and all that for that, and then fail your parents like that?" I wouldn't, I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it, but I didn't even graduate but I feel proud. I'm still on myself, because of what they had done. You see what I'm saying? Do you understand what I am saying? So, it's tough, so, you know. Back to your question. If they do the right thing. I don't think they would stay here. They would go somewhere else, which I would be so proud of, like my- my daughter. She graduated high school. She went into military. She stayed there eight years. Turns out she's got MS. They put her out of service. Give her 90% of her pay. Went back to school,

finished her degree for nursing. She's got a nursing license, and she's a nursing OIE. That's why I'm wearing this shirt.

Kio: That's so good.

Ward: So yeah, if they do the right thing, but they ain't not gonna stay here. The ones that stay in here are the ones that's, nine times out of ten, they're gonna go to jail. Cause there ain't nothing here for them, they gonna hang in that corner, do nothing, and they gonna get in trouble, and they're going to get. So that's the thing about Crisfield.

Ottey: That goes back to with what you were saying. There's a lot of jobs to keep people here, at least keep the youth interested in growing their careers here.

Ward: I see it every day. I didn't even talk to him until I said it. Sometimes I ask them, I ask them questions, easy old questions. They don't even know. Who is your president? They couldn't even tell you. So well, man, this town, well, not the town, the people, they just got to, I blame it on the parents. Everything- everything I do, I'm blaming it on parents. If you ain't taught your kids the right way, then bring them up the right way, you let them stray away. Get them in church. Why don't you get them in the church? Get it in them first. They may leave, but when trouble comes their way, they'll come back. They'll come back. That's the key.

Kio: So tell us about raising children in Crisfield and how that went.

Ward: I never had a problem raising my mine. Never had a problem. My kids were the greatest. And I ain't bragging. I'm just telling you; they were, I never had a problem with my kids. Never. My son! You might not believe it, I can only remember him crying one time. When he was about three or four, he was in the- was in the bed and he cried out, "Daddy, daddy!" "What's wrong?" I don't know, he must have had a nightmare or something. But when he was little, I don't remember him doing a lot of crying. I mean, you know, if he cried for the guy, if he got wet or anything, he need changing. But crying out this, wa wa wa. Cause I used to take him to church and he'd sit up there like a grown-up. Never had no crying anyway. You go to church, it's like Sunday, we had a kid in there running all up and down. I was like, "Oh my God, y'all are gonna train these kids?" So, but what was your question?

Kio: Just about, like, generally, like how the atmosphere of raising kids in Crisfield was.

Ward: Was or now?

Kio: Two different questions, I guess. Let's go over both.

Ward: Well, it's different now, but back then, people were more, I'll use myself. Fear, that my stepfather put fear in me. You did something, boy. You get it. He was a beast. I mean, y'all took him to a terrible way. He never really beat me that much because I was a runner. I had a run. But

my other brothers might need to get it, you put fear in you and when he look at you, you straighten up. Now a days! These kids, man, I don't blame the kids, the parents, I go over to this project. I see kids. Three, two, three, four years old, in the streets, being about Dollar General, on a bicycle, a little teeny old bicycle. I'm like, "Where is your mom and dad?" and they might cuss me out. It's just the upbringing. It's not like it used to be. It is a different upbringing now. And you know, with the new rules that they put out now, you can't touch your kids. And the kids are smarter than what you think they are. And they do stuff now. "You can't touch me; I'll call the police." So that's the difference. When we were coming up, boy, and I did something wrong, sheesh, my- my best friend's daddy would whoop me and then take me home and I'd get whooped again. Nowadays, you know, nah, you can't touch them. That's just the difference with what's going on in the world and with kids, and kids now are beating their moms and dad, killing their mom and dad because of the upbringing. The girl told me one time, I remember one time she looked down and said, girl, no, it was a boy. My cousin too. I went to his house and they had a little child. I said, "Hey, there," and they told him, they told the boy to F him. And the little boy said it. And I stopped, I said, and they started laughing. I said, "Look, y'all think that's funny. That ain't funny. Let me tell you something, you raised a monster right now." "What do you mean you raised a monster?" You're teaching him wrong. Adolescent. Everything you tell him now sinks in. And they laughed it off, and I just walked out of the house. I'm the bad one. I'm a bad one. That's what I'm trying to tell you, the difference. It's not the kids. It's what you teach the kids, and it's so sad. It's sad. You know, a kid- a kid can do something now, and he's only doing what he was taught.

Kio: And has like, would you say the safety of raising kids in Crisfield has changed over time as well?

Ward: When you say safety?

Kio: Like, in my last interview, we had a woman who mentioned how it used to be kids were safe to like just ride their bikes up and down the street, and now parents are a lot more worried about letting children roam out in Crisfield.

Ward: They're still around them kids going away kids, you know. I mean. as far as people around, they don't bother nobody's kids. I ain't never seen them like that in Crisfield, but I know what- what happened not too long ago from not watching their kids. My stepbrother, not blood, but his stepbrother, the one that I'm talking about, my stepfather, it's his real son. He came from his daughter's house one night, after day, and the family was out in the yard. And the little boy got hit, got ran over by my brother, killed him, killed the boy, that was a mess. They was trying to blame, they didn't know who to blame it on, but if you ask me, I blame it on the family. Child, baby. How'd you let the baby run out in the road like that? Then he could have been not paying attention too, because the way he got hit at was at stop sign, coming at a stop sign. But he ran up and killed it, killed the little boy. That was like 7 months ago? 7, 7 months ago?

Kio: Oh wow.

Ward: But far as, I mean, I never let mine run around like that. Because like I said, you get hit by a car, anything, tragic. But I had never heard anybody grab my kid or do anything like that, cause everybody around knows everybody. But we never seen that yet, I've never seen it since I've been living here.

Ottey: So as far as the actual city of Crisfield goes, how would you say that maybe Crisfield has changed in terms of like raising children there, like I guess what do kids around here really do maybe in their free time if they're not in school or something, you know?

Ward: I don't know. All they got is that basketball court over there in the project. They go over there now, they play in that, and she'd be packed. But like I said, people just don't teach their kids. You go over to spend on a Sunday and go over on a Monday morning, it's like you're down to the city dump. There's trash everywhere, and you got trash cans everywhere out there. It's all about how you teach, man. I've been telling people that you got to teach your children to know when they're little, when they little teeny. You drop something for them, pick it up, put it in your trashcan, all right? There you go, good boy. That's what you do. I've seen them, man, I've see them parents take their ass straight, dump it right in the road. Who taught them that? Maybe their parents.

Kio: And are you hopeful for the future of Crisfield and where would you like to see it heading in like the next 20 years?

Ward: I like Crisfield, and I pray to every day that it gets better. With all the new technology and stuff that we have now, it should be- everything should be, by the way, I mean, kids are smarter than we are. They know more about computers than anybody. You give it to a four-year-old, he can get in your phone. I in 20 years from now? Crisfield. I don't know if Crisfield will be here in 20 years. That's a question I couldn't answer. I couldn't answer that question because I just pray that it is and it gets better. That's all you can do, I mean, you know. And we just gotta have great leaders too. And you're gonna need a great leader as great leaders. This could be a- this could be great place. Anytime I ever see birds flying around like that. You know, I'm an outdoorsman. I like to see birds, butterflies, all kinds of animals. I got a little bunny out where I live at. I got squirrels, rabbits, in town, too! Deer! Yeah, I just, I like where I stay at, but the other place has got the same thing, though. But where I'm at, we have this bush when you go up the deck, it's a big bush. Just right up against the wall. And every year, I mean, you ought to see the butterflies, man. It's beautiful. I'll show you. I'll take a picture and show you these butterflies.

Ottey: Yeah, so while you're finding that picture, it looks like we're just about to wrap up here with a minute left until we hit our one-hour mark, so.

Ward: Okay, this one will be louder than before, I guess. [pauses] I'm trying my butterflies. Oh yeah, are they pretty?

Kio: Oh wow! Yeah!

Ward: But it's a lot of little teeny ones you can't see on here, but there are some little ones and a lot of little ones.

Kio: Yeah.

Ward: Let me see if I can find them little ones in here. Yeah, they're in there. See them? They got little ones on in there, they're a little butterfly.

Kio: Oh wow, yeah!

Ward: But it's a lot of them in the summertime. All those little spots, they're little teeny baby ones and they got this yellow one that comes every year. I didn't get him, but it's a big yellow one too. This is right beside my deck when I go up the steps and they don't even go to where they come all around me.

Ottey: That's gorgeous, yeah.

Ward: I enjoyed this interview.

Kio: Well, that's wonderful.

Ottey: Yeah, likewise.

Ward: Makes me feel a little better because some of the stuff, a lot of stuff, I mean, I bottle up, but I don't bring it out. But I feel a lot better from what I did tell you. And it makes me want to do more for this town. And it makes me feel better, yeah. I'll just thank y'all guys for letting me do this.

Kio: Of course, and do you have any like last thoughts of like wisdom you'd like to share with about Crisfield or for the future of Crisfield?

Ward: For the future of Crisfield. I'm a big church guy. I- I, you know, I pray that these churches will fill up again like they used to be. I remember the time where churches would be full on mostly young this time of the year. You know because you have next year, you have, I mean next week you got Easter. And the churches used to be, the kids used to come. They used to bring the kids and they'd just do their Easter speeches. Now let's dwindle down, man. You might have five little Easter speeches now. Back then you 18 and 19 kids doing Easter speeches. And would and- and I just pray that all that comes back, you know. See, that that's what we need. Get them all back in church again and- and learn to love your neighbor. You have

to love one another. That's my thing. Just love one other. That's what Jesus said. When he died, he said just love one another as you had to love me. That's it. That's the key! And that's all I- that's all I pray for. Then we can figure it out after that. Put God first.

Kio: Yeah.

Ottey: Well, I think we're out of questions. Go ahead and end the recording here.

Kio: Alright, and then we also.

[Transcript ends]